NOTIFICATION OF PROPOSED ACTION
ON PUBLIC LANDS DESIGNATED PART OF
THE NATIONAL WILDERNESS PRESERVATION SYSTEM

STATE: California

DISTRICT: California Desert District

FIELD OFFICE: Needles Field Office

COUNTY: San Bernardino County

WILDERNESS AREA: Chemehuevi Wilderness

In the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) efforts to inform affected or interested public about proposed actions, specific emergencies, or unauthorized activities occurring within BLM Wilderness areas, the following information is provided.

AUTHORITY:

43 United States Code (U.S.C.) 1701 and 1733 (Federal Land Policy and Management Act), 16 U.S.C. 410 (California Desert Protection Act) and 1131 (The Wilderness Act)

The California Desert Protection Act (CDPA) designated the Chemehuevi Mountains as wilderness in 1994. Section 103 of the CDPA provides that each wilderness area designated by the act shall be administered in accordance with the provisions of the Wilderness Act of 1964. The CDPA also states the following:

- Sec 2 (a)(2), "these desert wildlands display unique scenic, historical, archeological, environmental, ecological, wildlife, cultural, scientific, educational, and recreational values used and enjoyed by millions of Americans for hiking and camping, scientific study and scenic appreciation"

- Sec 2 (b)(1)(E), "retain and enhance opportunities for scientific research in undisturbed ecosystems."

Section 4(b) of the Wilderness Act states "Except as otherwise provided in this Act, each agency administering any area designated as wilderness shall be responsible for preserving the wilderness character of the area and shall so administer such area for such other purposes for which it may have been established as also to preserve its wilderness character. Except as otherwise provided in this Act, wilderness areas shall be devoted to the public purposes of recreational, scenic, scientific, educational, conservation, and historical use.

1. Background

The highly exposed Chemehuevi fault system is likely the world's best-documented low-angle normal faults (LANFs) and, the ideal field laboratory. Over time, these faults may develop and slip in a number of ways, at times creating earthquakes. The movement of the Earth's crust along faults is an important mechanism for taking up stresses that arise on a dynamic, changing planet.

The University of Wyoming will build upon previous research of the Chemehuevi fault system and will address the paradox surrounding LANFs and the potential for associated seismic hazard through interpretation of deformation processes and the partitioning of strain in rocks formed within the fault systems. The information obtained will help scientists understand whether active low angle normal faults, including those mapped in Nevada (near Reno) and Utah (due east of Salt Lake City), Italy, Greece, and other populated areas, pose a significant, but unrecognized seismic/earthquake threat to society. Results from this research are also expected to help resolve the inconsistency between field observations, theory, and the limited earthquake record along low-angle normal faults."

2. Proposed Action

The University of Wyoming proposes to conduct a geological study of the Chemehuevi Mountains Fault system over a three year period beginning on March 1, 2013 and extending to February 28, 2015. A geological team will hike, camp and conduct field studies in multiple locations. The majority of the project will occur over a 30-day period during the spring of 2013, with additional shorter visits occurring in the spring of 2014 and 2015. The geology team consisting of approximately six people will stage their project from outside the southwestern corner of the wilderness on lands previously disturbed. A helicopter will be utilized to make a series of trips to off-load staff, equipment, and approximately 2,400 pounds of water, which will be cashed at Sites 2, 3, 4, and 6. Helicopter use at Sites 2, 3, 4, and 6, will total 8 flights into wilderness at the start of the season, and less at the end of the field work period. The helicopter will return in 30 days to remove all remaining supplies and equipment. No helicopters will be used during the 2014 and 2015 research activities. Sites 1 and 5 will be utilized during the second year of the project. Once inside wilderness all actions will be carried out on foot.

The proposed action is subject to and in conformance with the California Desert Conservation Area Management Plan of 1980 (as amended) in accordance with Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations 1610.5-3. The management plan's Recreation Element Goals are to 4. Manage the use of public information and education techniques to increase public awareness, enjoyment, and sensitivity to desert resources. The Element's Education and Research section provides that many of the studies and research findings are incorporated into the Bureau's evaluation of its management programs and environmental studies and assessments. All will be incorporated into BLM's on-going monitoring systems.

3. Special Provisions

Notification of the proposed action and analysis for the University of Wyoming: Geological Study – Chemehuevi Mountains Wilderness Environmental Assessment (EA) will be posted under Quick Links on the main page of the Needles Field Office web site (http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/needles.html). If you have any questions or comments please follow direction within the web site in regards to submitting public comments.

4. Advisory

This notice is for disclosure purposes; specific comments are not required.

Field Manager, Needles Field Office

28 Jan 13
Date

University of Wyoming Research Sites